Rock Raiders
5/26/99

Please contact your account manager/coordinator to arrange another review date prior to final QA submission. A response regarding these issues is appreciated within two weeks of receipt.

The latest revision of Rock Raiders contains an example of a typical game environment with enemies. This revision also highlights the various Rock Raider vehicle models and their physics. The Rock Raider vehicles look excellent and control, as one would imagine. The greatest concern with the title at this point is how the various elements will be combined together to create a cohesive game environment that is both fun and challenging.

Based on the revision of Rock Raiders dated, 5/10/98, submitted by Lego Media, the product evaluation group has compiled an evaluation report. Below are the items of most importance.

- The current satellite camera is effective when the character is operating vehicles but it could be improved for those times when the Lego man is not in a vehicle. By pulling the camera down behind the character during walking sequences, the character is emphasized to a greater degree, the environments appear larger and a sense of scale can be shown using close ups of the vehicle models. The user should see a horizon in the distance while walking around. The Rock Raiders universe appears to be quite interesting; allow the user to feel as if they are in it, not simply observing it from above.

- There is no element of construction/destruction in the game. While this title focuses more on presenting the immersive universe of the Rock Raiders, the overall theme of creative play associated with Lego's could be better incorporated. One method might be to hide special Lego blocks throughout each level for the user to discover. Upon collecting all, or subsets of all the blocks, the user would be presented with a new vehicle that would prove useful in the current or preferably bonus levels, providing a way to gain extra crystals, lives or vehicles. These blocks could be mysterious remnants of a lost Lego civilization ala the monolith in 2001. Alternately the user could simply be required to gather blocks and deposit them in certain locations and the computer would slowly assemble them into useful items like bases or vehicles. Some time-based missions such as disassembling and relocating a base before it sinks beneath lava lend themselves to showcase a construction/destruction element.

- Multiple levels of reward should be implemented with an easy, medium and hard solution to each mission. The hard solutions should utilize more elements in the environment in combination while easy solutions rely primarily on brute force. This will encourage replay, exploration and expand the age group who will appreciate the game. Current designs seem to present only an easy and hard solution, with a large leap in complexity between them.

- The secondary functions of the various vehicles have not been implemented. The player should be given direct, yet simple, control of the various vehicle functions. For example a single button could be used to engage and disengage the drill on the Rock Drillers, two buttons could be used to raise and lower the bucket on the Rock Loader.   Utilizing these functions in combat, such as hitting or picking up and moving enemies with the loader bucket, would enhance gameplay.

- The placement of Power Crystals has not been implemented. The position and accessibility of these crystals will dictate the pace and flow of the gameplay. Attention must be focused on this aspect of gameplay to insure a satisfactory and gradual increase in difficulty.

- The space beyond the edge of the worlds is simply black. This is unrealistic and some graphic that represents inaccessible terrain, such as high mountains, should be put in place.

- Ground vehicle physics should be improved. The lighting effects used appear to indicate variations in elevation. The movement of vehicles over this terrain should indicate such as well. They should move slower up hill and faster downhill as well as bounce over bumpy terrain.

- Additional special effects would enhance the appearance of the game. Vehicles should leave tracks or wakes behind. Dust should fly up when air vehicles land and take off. Gasses should vent from craters or holes in the ground. Strange lighting effects from nebulas and auroras should be seen reflected on objects in the environment. Crystals should flicker and shine with energy.

Below are issues that are not apparent or not yet implemented:

- There is no indication as to what rocks may be drilled and what rocks cannot be manipulated.

- Enemy AI is rudimentary. Enemies simply chase after characters and lack attack animations.

- Flying vehicles at this time fly above all manner of terrain. Will flying vehicles be unable to fly over solid rock walls?

- Will players be able to see the entire map or will they be limited to seeing only those areas that they have immediate access to? How large will the bigger maps be? Presently players can only see sections of the map by utilizing the movement of the main character. Will there be some form of overhead map or will the player be able to scroll around the entire map without using a character to do so? A map that slowly reveals new detail as new area is explored is suggested.

SCEA Third Party Product Evaluation Group